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County Employment and Wages in North Carolina – Fourth Quarter 2014

Employment increased in all of North Carolina's nine large counties from December 2013 to December 2014, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported today. (Large counties are those with 2013 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment growth in five of the nine large counties was equal to or above the national average. (See [table 1.](#))

Nationally, employment advanced 2.2 percent from December 2013 to December 2014 as 319 of the 339 largest U.S. counties registered increases. Weld, Colo., and Midland, Texas, had the largest percentage increases, with gains of 8.0 percent each over the year. Atlantic, N.J., had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment among the largest counties in the U.S., with a loss of 5.0 percent.

Among the nine largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg County (630,400) and Wake County (503,300) in December 2014. Guilford County (275,200) was the only other large county in North Carolina to have an employment level greater than 250,000. Together, the nine largest North Carolina counties accounted for 53.4 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 339 largest counties made up 72.1 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2013 to the fourth quarter of 2014, Buncombe County recorded the fastest rate of increase in average weekly wages among the nine large counties in North Carolina, registering a gain of 4.9 percent. (See [table 1.](#)) Durham County recorded the highest average weekly wage among these large counties at \$1,271, followed by Mecklenburg County (\$1,125) and Wake County (\$1,008). Nationally, the average weekly wage increased to \$1,035, a 3.5 percent increase, during the year ending in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 91 counties in North Carolina with employment levels below 75,000. With the exception of Orange County (\$1,044), wage levels in all of these smaller counties were below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2014. (See [table 2.](#))

Large county wage changes

Average weekly wages increased in each of the nine largest counties in North Carolina from the fourth quarter of 2013 to the fourth quarter of 2014. The wage gains in two of the state's large counties placed in the top 100 of the national ranking—Buncombe (4.9 percent, 50th) and Guilford (4.2 percent, 99th). (See [table 1.](#))

Nationally, 332 of the 339 largest counties registered over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Benton, Ark., had the largest wage gain, up 9.9 percent from the fourth quarter of 2013. Washington, Pa., was second with a wage increase of 9.2 percent, followed by the counties of Midland, Texas (9.0 percent), Brazoria, Texas (8.9 percent), and Douglas, Colo. (8.8 percent).

Of the 339 largest U.S. counties, 7 experienced over-the-year decreases in average weekly wages. San Mateo, Calif., had the largest percentage decrease in average weekly wages, with a loss of 20.4 percent from the fourth quarter 2013. Olmsted, Minn., had the second largest percentage decrease in average weekly wages with a loss of 5.5 percent, followed by Morris, N.J. (-2.9 percent), Rockland, N.Y. (-1.3 percent), and Camden, N.J. and Butler, Pa. (-0.8 percent each).

Large county average weekly wages

Durham County (\$1,271) and Mecklenburg County (\$1,125) had the highest average weekly wages in North Carolina and ranked 28th and 60th, respectively, among the 339 large U.S. counties by wage level. Average weekly wages in the state's remaining seven large counties were below the national average of \$1,035 in the fourth quarter of 2014. Catawba (\$760) reported the lowest average weekly wage among the state's large counties and ranked 323rd nationwide.

Nationally, 95 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average of \$1,035 in the fourth quarter of 2014. San Mateo, Calif., held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$2,166. New York, N.Y., was second at \$2,138, followed by Santa Clara, Calif. (\$2,114), Suffolk Mass. (\$1,856), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,850).

Seventy-two percent of the largest U.S. counties (244) reported weekly wages below the national average. Horry County, S.C., reported the lowest wage (\$610), followed by the Texas counties of Cameron (\$621) and Hidalgo (\$641), and the Florida counties of Osceola (\$687) and Lake (\$691).

Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties

With the exception of Orange County (\$1,044), all 91 counties in North Carolina with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages below the national average of \$1,035. Among these smaller counties, Iredell had the second highest average weekly wage at \$886, while Clay had the lowest at \$553. (See [table 2](#).)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, all but 4 had wages below the national average. Ten reported average weekly wages under \$600, 51 had wages from \$600 to \$699, 26 reported wages from \$700 to \$799, 8 had wages from \$800 to \$899, and 5 had wages of \$900 or more. (See [chart 1](#).)

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states have been included in this release in [table 3](#). For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the [Technical Note](#) or visit www.bls.gov/cew.

Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2013 edition of this publication contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2014 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2013* are now available online at

<http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn13.htm>. The 2014 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2015.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2015 is scheduled to be released on Thursday, September 17, 2015.

Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The 9.5 million employer reports cover 139.2 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons—some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. These potential differences result from the states' continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 9 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2014

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2014 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2013-14 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, fourth quarter 2013-14 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	139,204.8	2.2	--	\$1,035	--	3.5	--
North Carolina.....	4,141.8	2.4	--	890	33	3.4	34
Buncombe, N.C.....	122.9	3.4	71	797	307	4.9	50
Catawba, N.C.....	83.2	1.7	183	760	323	4.0	113
Cumberland, N.C.....	118.6	0.1	317	771	318	0.7	326
Durham, N.C.....	192.2	2.2	140	1,271	28	1.0	319
Forsyth, N.C.....	181.6	2.0	158	933	180	4.2	99
Guilford, N.C.....	275.2	1.5	209	890	219	3.5	168
Mecklenburg, N.C.....	630.4	3.8	46	1,125	60	2.5	248
New Hanover, N.C.....	104.9	3.5	66	828	281	3.8	133
Wake, N.C.....	503.3	3.9	42	1,008	119	2.4	258

⁽¹⁾ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁽²⁾ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

⁽³⁾ Ranking does not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

⁽⁴⁾ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 2. Covered⁽¹⁾ employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, 4th quarter 2014⁽²⁾

Area	Employment December 2014	Average Weekly Wage (³)
United States (⁴)	139,204,840	\$1,035
North Carolina.....	4,141,759	890
Alamance.....	59,428	721
Alexander.....	8,877	645
Alleghany.....	3,184	581
Anson.....	7,833	629
Ashe.....	6,882	659
Avery.....	6,678	571
Beaufort.....	15,769	704
Bertie.....	6,527	572
Bladen.....	12,271	692
Brunswick.....	28,643	729
Buncombe.....	122,928	797
Burke.....	29,808	692
Cabarrus.....	69,074	749
Caldwell.....	23,395	669
Camden.....	1,448	775
Carteret.....	21,986	628
Caswell.....	3,051	614
Catawba.....	83,187	760
Chatham.....	14,660	698
Cherokee.....	8,010	604
Chowan.....	4,656	705
Clay.....	2,031	553
Cleveland.....	33,764	714
Columbus.....	15,692	656
Craven.....	38,554	805
Cumberland.....	118,557	771
Currituck.....	5,935	669
Dare.....	16,685	623
Davidson.....	42,173	710
Davie.....	11,448	669
Duplin.....	20,073	638
Durham.....	192,204	1,271
Edgecombe.....	17,606	673
Forsyth.....	181,568	933
Franklin.....	11,549	785
Gaston.....	70,241	757
Gates.....	1,501	687
Graham.....	1,823	678
Granville.....	20,106	800
Greene.....	4,019	607
Guilford.....	275,182	890
Halifax.....	16,059	630
Harnett.....	22,710	650
Haywood.....	16,776	665
Henderson.....	35,116	734
Hertford.....	9,114	722
Hoke.....	7,609	604
Hyde.....	2,068	570
Iredell.....	69,016	886
Jackson.....	12,960	663
Johnston.....	45,945	714

Table 2. Covered⁽¹⁾ employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, 4th quarter 2014⁽²⁾ - Continued

Area	Employment December 2014	Average Weekly Wage (³)
Jones.....	1,563	628
Lee.....	24,259	758
Lenoir.....	27,820	711
Lincoln.....	21,705	706
McDowell.....	16,177	637
Macon.....	10,879	636
Madison.....	3,827	605
Martin.....	7,234	593
Mecklenburg.....	630,439	1,125
Mitchell.....	4,918	633
Montgomery.....	9,210	669
Moore.....	33,087	767
Nash.....	40,783	737
New Hanover.....	104,906	828
Northampton.....	5,398	645
Onslow.....	48,870	629
Orange.....	66,478	1,044
Pamlico.....	3,288	561
Pasquotank.....	15,490	707
Pender.....	10,322	675
Perquimans.....	1,949	635
Person.....	9,982	736
Pitt.....	75,445	833
Polk.....	4,859	599
Randolph.....	44,426	677
Richmond.....	13,576	651
Robeson.....	39,252	624
Rockingham.....	26,347	681
Rowan.....	45,915	785
Rutherford.....	18,460	642
Sampson.....	18,348	685
Scotland.....	11,829	704
Stanly.....	18,824	645
Stokes.....	7,067	588
Surry.....	28,163	660
Swain.....	9,147	669
Transylvania.....	8,181	643
Tyrrell.....	1,112	581
Union.....	59,282	815
Vance.....	15,009	653
Wake.....	503,267	1,008
Warren.....	3,338	663
Washington.....	3,529	770
Watauga.....	22,371	674
Wayne.....	42,622	687
Wilkes.....	21,441	673
Wilson.....	38,358	805
Yadkin.....	9,806	631
Yancey.....	3,682	603

⁽³⁾ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁽⁴⁾ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2014

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2014 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2013-14	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2013-14	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	139,204.8	2.2	\$1,035	--	3.5	--
Alabama	1,891.4	1.3	881	35	3.5	31
Alaska	317.6	0.8	1,063	13	4.0	20
Arizona	2,630.8	2.2	926	25	2.3	47
Arkansas	1,180.5	2.2	807	47	4.5	5
California	16,068.5	2.6	1,209	6	2.9	41
Colorado	2,478.0	3.9	1,066	12	4.1	17
Connecticut	1,681.2	1.2	1,278	4	2.7	45
Delaware	433.0	2.9	1,049	16	1.5	51
District of Columbia	736.9	0.9	1,696	1	3.7	28
Florida	8,009.6	3.5	911	28	3.1	40
Georgia	4,131.9	3.7	958	21	3.8	25
Hawaii	638.3	0.7	908	29	4.2	15
Idaho	650.7	2.5	782	50	4.0	20
Illinois	5,844.1	1.4	1,089	8	2.8	42
Indiana	2,946.5	1.7	846	41	3.9	22
Iowa	1,527.6	1.1	870	38	4.3	11
Kansas	1,377.2	1.3	855	39	2.6	46
Kentucky	1,852.2	1.8	836	43	4.1	17
Louisiana	1,954.0	2.1	923	26	3.8	25
Maine	592.7	0.9	826	44	5.1	4
Maryland	2,590.3	1.3	1,113	7	3.5	31
Massachusetts	3,415.6	2.2	1,315	3	4.5	5
Michigan	4,158.9	2.1	984	20	3.3	37
Minnesota	2,762.9	1.4	1,024	17	3.6	30
Mississippi	1,118.6	1.0	747	51	2.3	47
Missouri	2,709.8	1.5	891	32	3.4	34
Montana	442.2	0.5	794	48	4.5	5
Nebraska	958.1	1.4	837	42	5.2	3
Nevada	1,229.6	4.2	899	30	1.6	50
New Hampshire	638.0	1.4	1,081	10	6.3	2
New Jersey	3,933.6	1.3	1,211	5	2.0	49
New Mexico	808.4	1.3	850	40	4.4	10
New York	9,067.6	2.0	1,321	2	4.3	11
North Carolina	4,141.8	2.4	890	33	3.4	34
North Dakota	454.8	4.5	1,050	15	7.1	1
Ohio	5,264.3	1.6	922	27	3.9	22
Oklahoma	1,614.3	2.1	876	36	2.8	42
Oregon	1,755.4	3.2	928	23	3.8	25
Pennsylvania	5,716.5	1.2	1,013	18	3.7	28
Rhode Island	471.5	1.9	1,003	19	4.5	5
South Carolina	1,931.4	2.9	817	46	3.2	39
South Dakota	412.5	1.3	791	49	4.2	15
Tennessee	2,822.1	2.4	927	24	3.5	31
Texas	11,662.7	3.7	1,070	11	4.3	11
Utah	1,324.2	3.0	872	37	4.3	11
Vermont	311.0	0.7	882	34	4.1	17
Virginia	3,691.4	0.6	1,057	14	2.8	42
Washington	3,069.7	3.2	1,082	9	4.5	5
West Virginia	712.0	0.1	818	45	3.3	37
Wisconsin	2,789.3	1.3	894	31	3.4	34

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2014 - Continued

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2014 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2013-14	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2013-14	National ranking by percent change
Wyoming.....	283.6	1.5	952	22	3.9	22
Puerto Rico.....	944.2	-1.5	556	(3)	0.7	(3)
Virgin Islands.....	38.5	-0.3	746	(3)	-1.2	(3)

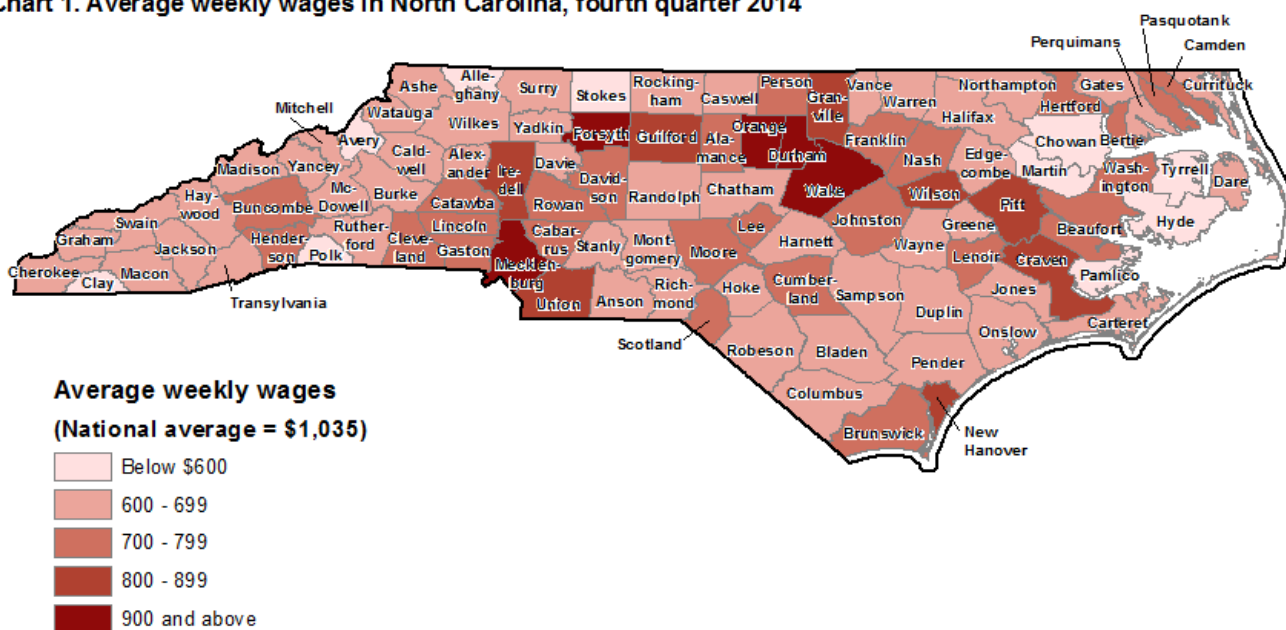
⁽¹⁾ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁽²⁾ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

⁽³⁾ Data not included in the national ranking.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.